

## Pollinator Patch with Juliet from Hive Helpers

### A good year for pollinators...so far

I am writing this during the fourth heatwave of the summer. My garden has been sadly neglected as I cower indoors in the heat of the day. The early mornings though are glorious, and I'm out trying to catch up on garden jobs before even the bees are up. Many pollinators have been faring well this summer, unlike last year. Blossom was early and plentiful, and there was plenty of good forage for all. Record numbers of butterflies have been recorded, and I have seen many red-tailed bumblebees, which tailed off alarmingly in 2024. The downside for bumbles is that they do not like it too hot (like me), being robust and hairy (not like me). I also worry that flowers which have come earlier than usual will be dying off long before they should, leaving late-season nectar supplies dangerously low. Honey bees will have been building up stores of honey for the winter (some of which will hopefully be left by the beekeeper), but bumblebee queens will need to keep feeding until they hibernate.

### Pollinator plant of the month – ivy

Our native common ivy (*Hedera helix*) comes into its own at this time of year, flowering from September to November. Provided you have left ivy to mature, the yellow-green flowers are produced in small rounded clusters, providing plentiful pollen and nectar for a range of insects, including honey bees, hoverflies and the specialist ivy mining bee (see below). Once these insects have pollinated the flowers, ivy berries provide a good source of food for birds later in the year, as well as shelter and nesting sites.

### Bee of the month – Ivy mining bee

The Ivy mining bee (*Colletes hederæ*) is distinguishable from the honey bee by the smart black and yellow stripes on its abdomen. This is the last of the solitary bees to emerge, timing its arrival to coincide with the ivy flowering season, on which it relies for pollen. It nests below ground in sparsely vegetated patches including lawns – a good excuse for a bare patch! Although solitary, in that it does not form a colony like honey bees and bumblebees, you will often see large numbers of these bees in a small area (called aggregations). Interestingly, this bee was only spotted in 2001 in Dorset, since when it has spread through most of southern Britain.



Ivy mining bee by Alex Potts

### Other September plants for pollinators

Salvias should be faring well in this hot weather. Salvias come in all shapes and sizes, including the well-known herb Sage, the Russian sage (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*), and beautiful Salvia 'Amistad' with its purple, long tubular flowers which I have seen in many gardens teeming with bees, but it stubbornly refuses to grow in mine! Sedums, too, are drought resistant with their fleshy leaves and are great for pollinators with their flat, nectar-rich flowerheads. Easy to grow in a sunny, well-drained border.

For a comprehensive list of plants for pollinators, visit <https://www.rhs.org.uk/science/conservation-biodiversity/wildlife/plants-for-pollinators> and download the garden plants list.